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BLOSSOM

from an ORCHARD

POEMS, SONGS, AND SONNETS



H. C. BOWEN



J. T. Ashby

from HCB.

Sept 1900.

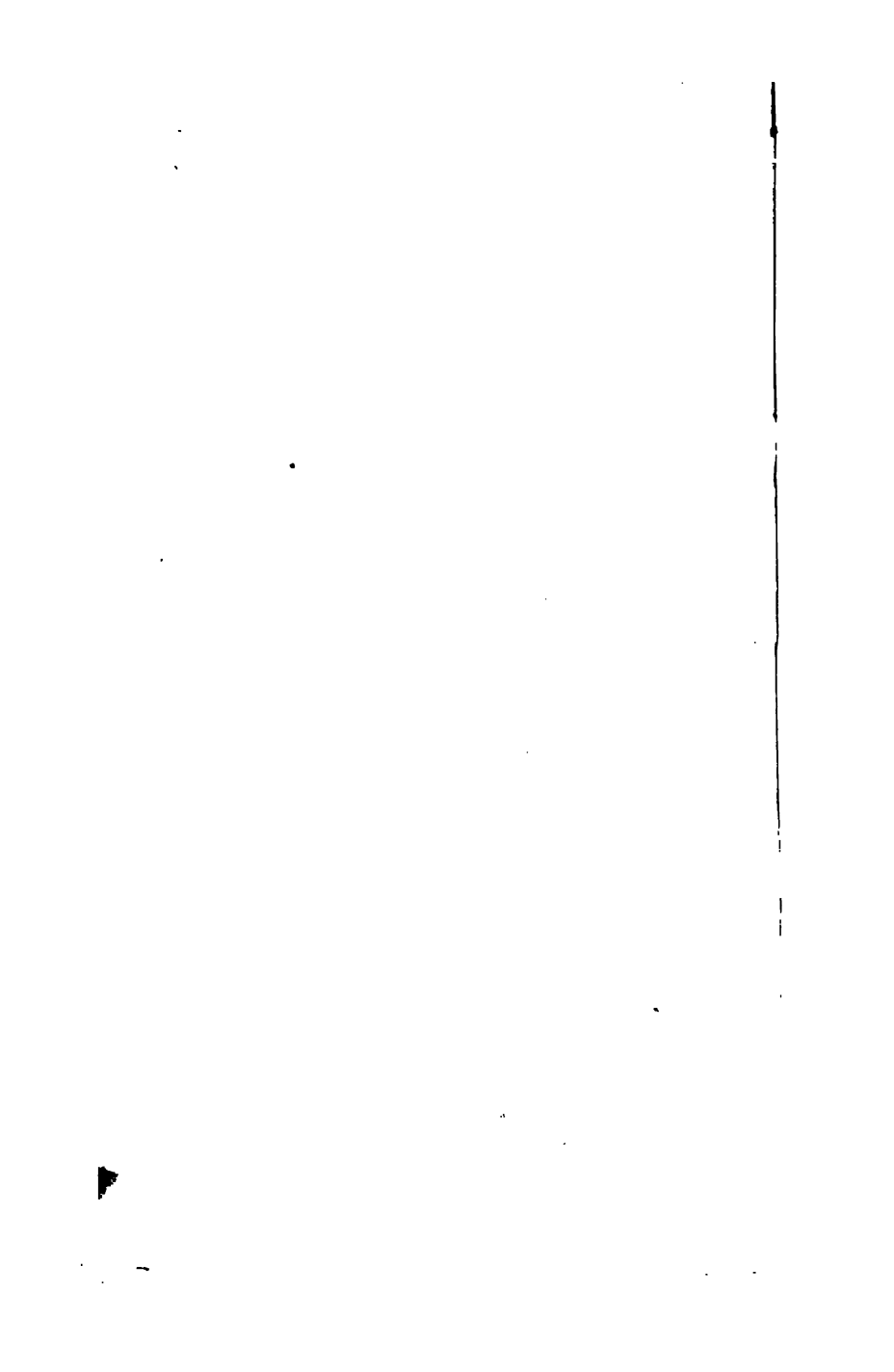
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BLOSSOM FROM AN ORCHARD



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POEMS, SONGS, AND SONNETS.

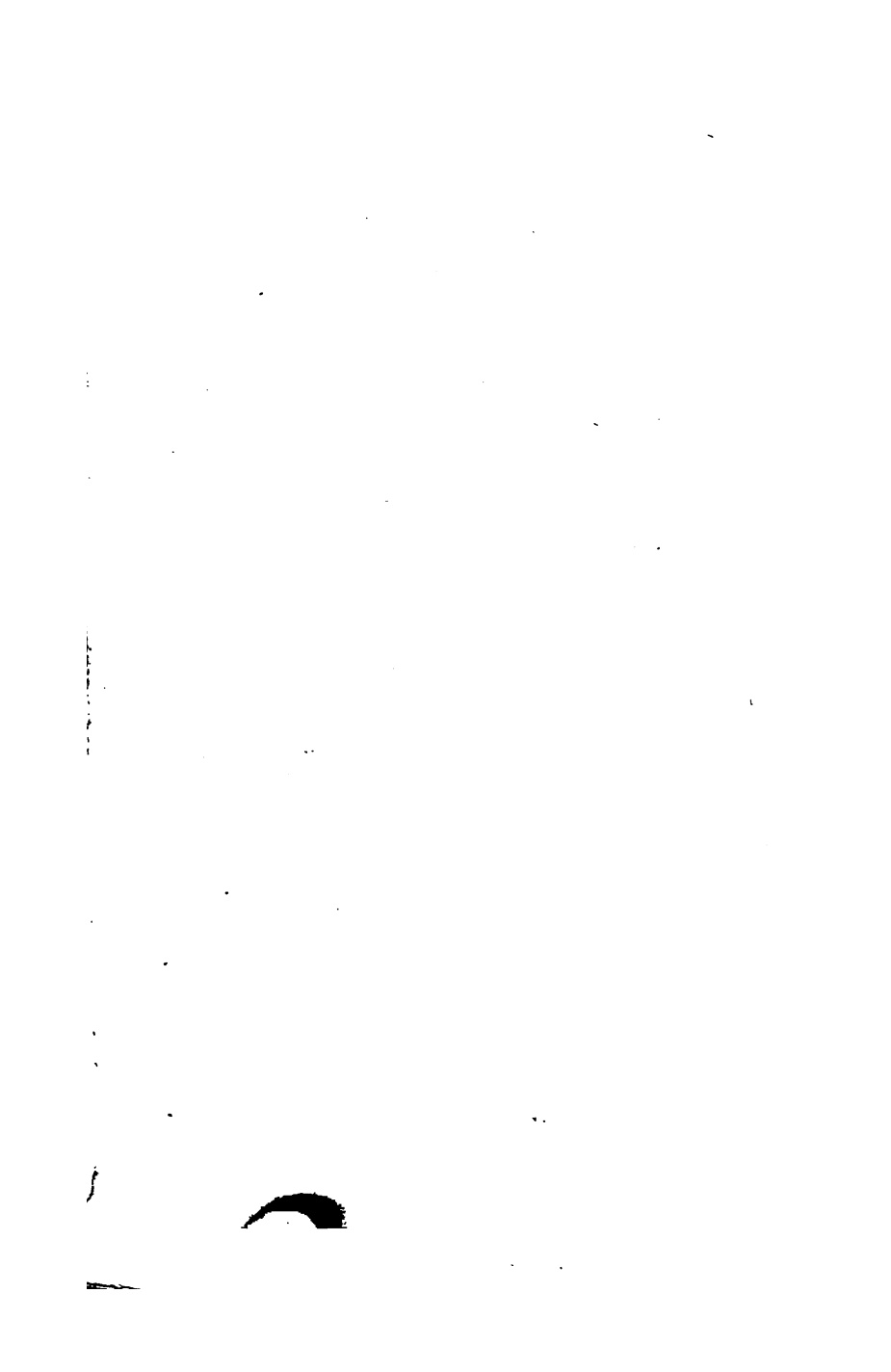
BY

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DEDICATION.

SEE here I hold this in mine outstretched hand

Across the waste of waters ! and I cry

“ Take this as love’s true offering !—this, that I
Must long in vain, in that dear distant land,
To kneel and lay with trembling where ye stand,
And greet the touch of blessing !”—Nay, ’tis
small?

Then add the hope that, holding my soul’s all,
Lies waiting at God’s feet for His command.

Haply ’twill never come :—yet to have hope
Fails not with God, who looks beyond mere scope.

Oh ! that my lips could utter, words receive
The thoughts which fill my heart !—Nay, words are
weak.

Oh ! father, mother, bending down I leave
God’s self to whisper what I cannot speak !



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JUDAS.

A MONODRAMA.

BROTHER, we'll rest us here upon the brow
Of this cool cliff awhile, before I pass
To Calvary, to look upon my work—
His cross—my work—before the thunder fall ;
To see—one lingering hope—if haply he
Be Son of God, as oft he seemed to say ;
And so may understand, despite my deed ;
And, knowing me, perchance may stretch a hand
To touch these lips amidst the thirst of hell.

Nay, brother, thou art weary ; rest thee here
Upon the soft dead grass, and place thy head
Against my knee, and sleep a little while.
Poor little head, thou'st wandered far to-day,
And thou art very weary, and art sad ;
So rest and sleep, my brother—*thou* canst sleep.

Softly awhile—the heavy eyelids close.

Why hell? Why hell? I've done a righteous deed.
A deed God set here in my heart to do ;
A deed the very priests themselves have sung—
God curse them for their cant hypocrisy !
They feared not God, but Rome—a righteous deed
And not an evil deed. Ay, when they said,
“ A man must die to save the people now ”—
And meant “ ourselves from Rome ”—my heart
leapt up

And cried “ Lo, I am he ! lo, I will die
That Christ may show himself ; and by this deed,
Lo, I will save the people—and from Rome ! ”
O Master, friend, couldst thou not read my thought?
O God, who standst there ready with thy stroke,
Didst thou not know? That evening when I came,
And, greeting with a kiss, said, “ This is he ! ”
Thou knowest I only hoped, I only thought
That he would rise and cry “ I am the Chief
Ye looked, and longed for ; come to cast the yoke
Back in the face of them that trample us !
To lift you from the dust, to make you free,

And set the crown of Judah highest, where
It shone for ages with the touch of God ! ”
O God, it was not he ! he bent his head
Too humbly to that Roman. Yet I thought
He surely then would speak :—it was not he.
I thought his soul at length would burst the dark,
And flash with the clear flash of steel ! Not so,
And so I merely gave up to the cross
A humble, loving man—a prophet, seer—
A wonder-worker, not a king ! . . . And yet . . .
And yet has he not oft-times seemed to say
(One lingering hope that flickers in the dark),
Did he not say, “ I am the Son of God ”—
Ay, to their face, “ the Son of God ? ”—Nay, nay,
No God would be so spit upon of men,
And slain. The Son of God ! nay, if so, death
Can have no power, though it have some pain.
What if the soul be God, the body man ?
The flesh may die, and yet the Godhead live.
Why so I lose my hope ; am merely damned
(And I am surely damned who did this thing),
And still know nought—true devil’s bargain thus.
—And yet if he be God, and strive with death,

• Surely some sign must come : the earth will quake
And shudder at the strife : the graves will gape,
And dead men walk the streets, their jailor slain.
For death is surely king of this wide world,
And reaps a goodly harvest. And what then?
I gain a little knowledge—and then hell.

And so once more an evil deed ; most ill,
Although most righteous. I have slain a friend,
A friend—at best a friend, at worst a God—
A Son of God as Abram was his friend—
A humble, holy, most wise, loving man,
To force his feet a way they would not go ;
To have him help us my way and not his.
And so, because he was not him I thought,
I'd take no help, but sent him to his death,
Scorned, scoffed, and spit upon of those he loved.
A most unrighteous deed.

Yet am not I
Scorned too, and scoffed, and spit upon of men,
The point and jeer of those I love—a sight
To make fond mothers shudder for their babes
When small lips find them in the silent night,

And maidens shrink and fly, and strong hale men
Pass by with quickened steps the other side?
“The man who sold his lord!” Ay, see to it
Ye who give coin to keep your own hands clean!
Who fear Rome and the people, and would have
Still either way, a way to save yourselves!
Ye cowering slaves! D’ye think it was for gold
I sold my friend? For gold? Was it for gold
I followed him these long long years? For gold?
Or rather some great aim, some hope? Ye know
I knew it not, until, when all was done,
And the strain fell from me, and brain grew clear,
And the deed shaped itself a real live deed,
I sat alone beside the ruin here,
And found your money burning in my palm.
I tricked you with sham greed—and spoiled you,
too,
As ye once spoiled Egyptians of their gold.
Did I go hoard it then, or did I come
And ring the pieces down before you all?
—O! God, he would not speak, he would not rise
And sound the words for which my heart was sick—
Did I not clash them down, and cry “Lo, I

Have given you a holy man to slay !”
And there amidst the silence of your hall
Heard your low mocking laugh, “See thou to that.”
Beware ! there is a place called hell that gapes
With wide hot sweltering mouth before us both !

Nay, stir not, little head, thou still mayst sleep.

Strange, that my childhood should come back
to-night
—This night that gathers surely somewhat soon—
Strange !—And the past years seem to hold their
hands
Before their eyes, as they go trooping by,
And mutter words that held my country’s name.

Nay, I’ll be calm, and sift the past once more,
If haply there be any grain of hope
To help the end, that now has crept so near.

My childhood is no longer part of me.
It only held for me my mother’s voice,
Her gentle presence,—and a joyless face

That ever darkened with the sense of wrong,
My father—murdered in a hopeless cause.
So this grim childhood vanished in the days
That wrapped me in a cloud of wandering night,
That cut me off from fellowship with men,
That hid me from my God, and drove me out
To wander in the wastes with wild dark thoughts.
—The sun seemed burnt to dust, the world a wreck,
Ruined and lost, cursed by the curse of God,
While in the silence of the desert night
I sat and listened for the last dread sound.
It had been well for me had that sound come.
—There, as I crouched one evening all alone,
Facing a sun that set in seas of blood
Behind the temple-hill, there came a man
Full of strange thoughts, a wild adventurous man,
But stirred with love and hopeful for our race,
Who said, “The time has come that we should rise
And cast the yoke from us that galls our necks.”
Then added words of prophecy of Christ ;
Yet ever seemed he glancing towards himself,
And all the mighty deeds that he would do
When we should rise anon ;—until he stirred

The deep springs of my life with his wild words,
And raised me from myself, until I saw,
As in a sudden lightning-flash from God,
My heart had one hope still amidst despair.
—Again, again we met ; and still we talked
Of the great day at hand. But though I saw
That this Barabbas was no king of men,
Though strong in his wild hope, yet from that day
My life was changed—grew to one single thought ;
One aim, one hope were meat, and drink, and
sleep ;
Until I only lived to make them free,
—Who loved me not—and scarce will love me now.

Whom do I speak to? Great God ! do I stand
Alone amidst the ruins of my hope,
And plead with thee alone a desperate cause ;
Crying from out the pit of my despair,
“ Thou knowest my heart ; it was no evil deed !
Just God, in justice listen to my life ! ”

Nay, 'tis my curse. My curse to tell the past,
At morn, at noon, and in the grave of night ;

Still, still to hope the hope, and do the deed ;
And, arguing still unto "the deed is just,"
To hear the words " nay, Judas, with a kiss ? "

Ah ! Christ, have pity and be pitiless !
Turn from me, Christ, those eyes a little space,
Or bid them curse me ! Nay, look not so sad
As though thou still couldst love !—O Christ, thy
love
Stings deeper than the deepest sting of hell !

Poor little sleeper, do I spoil thy rest
With all these shifts and starts and sudden cries ?
I'll lay thy head upon a better place
Where touch of Judas shall not spoil thy sleep.
Thy face is pale and hollow—thou art ill.
Would God that thou wert safe amongst the dead.

Was it to seek me that he came that way ?
Or was it I that followed when he passed,
Knowing my Master ?—and not he that sought ?
I know not ; but I know my stricken heart
Went hungering out to find a guide, a friend,

A little solace of mere human love,
A Master for the riches that I held
Of strong endeavour, boundless love and hope.
There as I sat a stone's cast from the road
Upon a fallen rock, and watched the sun
Smite on the pinnacles, where once of old
God's presence filled the temple with amaze—
Sudden a shadow fell upon the stone
Beside me, noiseless as a cloud, and then
At once my heart leapt—There he stood, my King !
With such a kingly sorrow in his eyes,
I bowed me down, and grovelled on the earth,
And laid my clinging arms about his knees,
And wept not passionate tears upon his feet.
“O Master ! save me ! I will follow thee
Thro' fire and death, I am so lonely here
That God himself forgets me, and my heart
Has hungered for thee sorely ; take my heart,
My life ; do with me as thou wilt.
Master, lead on, and I will follow thee.”
I think his hand a moment touched my head,
For peace came on me then ; and I arose
And followed in a dream the way he led.

Nay, God, thou knowest, thou rememberest well !
Thou knowest that I loved him with a love
That burnt like fire within me night and day !

They never loved me—never looked at me
With eyes that knew me—those he loved so well,
Whom I had loved too had they suffered me—
Small men forever bent on little things ;
Toiling, not thinking ; seeking how to help
Just this poor man and that, and gain their bread ;
Dull peasant folk who heard their country's name
As some plain household thing—without a stir
Of heart or eye, or giddy swirl of brain.

For me, alas, there never was great store
Of love, to give or take, in this wide world.
I have lived forlorn, forbid. My mother's love,
Like to the fitful breeze upon the lake,
That softly blows at dawn, but dies at noon,
At my noonday it died—or seemed to die—
And all my sails flapped in an evil calm.
—Thou, only thou, dear heart that sleepest there,
Thou, only thou, hast loved me as I loved—

And then my country stole into my heart,
A drifting ship with crew cold, starved, and dead,
And blew the sails all full, and took the helm,
And steered me out across the dancing waves.
A little while, and all was bright past hope ;
A little while with all my blood astir—
Then came the storm : and stubborn and alone
I faced the weather fiercely, held right on,—
And rushed upon the rocks of this despair.
Alas, my country, had I loved thee less,
Or loved more wisely, I had loved him more.
I thought I loved him well ; to-day I know
It was my country that I loved, not him—
Or him but as her Saviour ; not my Lord,
My friend, my gentle teacher, my heart's King.
That personal love has come an hour too late—
And not with healing balm, but as a curse
That burns my eyes, and maddens in my blood—
A haunting curse of God that never dies.
O, thou that wast so gentle—never wrath
But once, and with good cause—and only stern
As one who must rebuke the friend he loves ;
O, thou most worthy in the world of love !

Master—whom I betrayed—it was not I
Who loved our country best. O, heart of hearts !
Wise messenger of peace ! not I, but thou !
Henceforth let no man dream an evil deed
Will save a people, though the bitter cost
Fall heavily on himself ; for God can work,
And still will work without the devil's hand.

How oft we tried him in those far-off days.
Fretted the great wise heart with foolishness,
Impatient ignorance—blind eyes—deaf ears—
Yet ever the same quiet gentleness,
That won them peace, and drove me to despair.

One day I most remember, one bright day,
Upon the pleasant slopes of Galilee.
All the long afternoon beneath the shade
Of a tall rock he stood, and taught the folk,
The common country folk, who gathered round
With implements of work, and garments red
With toiling in the fields, and feet unwashed,
And here and there a fisher with his nets,
Women and children, and some halt and sick—
The most part those whom labour bows and breaks ;

These ever gathered thickly—to my grief—
Some standing, others sitting, lying round,
And all with faces turned to that one face.

How clear the scene comes back. I think I see
The little bush before me, and the stone,
And on't the lizard basking in the sun.

The Master spake. I know not what he said :
The same wise tale of peace, and brotherhood,
Of meek submission. But I sat and watched
The faces redden, and again grow pale,
The eyes that flashed out with a sudden hope ;
And thought "the time is near : will these stand
firm ?

I would that they were healthier strong men."
The preaching done, we climbed the hill a mile,
And, 'neath the olives, rested on the ground.
I sat somewhat apart ; and, in a dream,
Out through the cloud of silvery green leaves,
I saw the sky as blue as Aaron's robe,
Spotless and bright, and, stretched out far below,
The motionless blue waters of the lake.

A brooding silence held the hill, save when
Some women's voices murmured through the trees,
Or the strayed kid bleated to find the herd.
The others near the Master lay asleep ;
I seemed alone awake ; and I alone
Thought of the days to come—the strife and blood,
Assault and victory ; and counted up
The little hoard, of which none knew save me,
Which I had gathered, suffering many words
From those who loved me not ; though their mis-
trust

Ne'er moved the Master. The Master—there he
stood,

His arms so meekly folded on his breast,
And in his eyes that look which read the heart.
I could not face him, and I could not fly ;
I could but listen, cowering while he spake :
“ Love, Judas, love—not violence, nor strength,
Nor hoarded coin, but only simple love.”
He knew it all then, and he was not wroth ;
He did not bid me go—would God he had—
Had slain me where he stood—blind beast and
fool,

I could not know, nor see, nor understand.
To-day I see and know—a day too late.

Brother, we must be moving. How he sleeps !

Nor only once a warning. Yet again—
That time when, with a quiet meaning smile,
After petition, oft made and oft set by,
He sent us twelve to preach and heal the sick.
Poor fools—what word had we for men to hear ;
What power to drive the devil from his haunts ;
What patience, we, to lead the simple folk !
For me, I boldly spoke of days now nigh,
The coming of the King—long hoped, long sought—
The need to gather strength, and face the foe.
The simple people listened open mouthed,
Then slunk away dismayed ; a turbulent few
(From whom I shrank) blustered, and followed me.
They of the twelve grew cold, and turned their
backs
Upon me one by one with words of blame,
And Peter bluntly bid me hold my peace—
I wrought the Master ill by my wild words.

The devils mocked me when I bid them go.

“ Ha, ha ! You name the name of Christ ! Why
you,

You’re sealed of Satan ! See ! ” I cowered down,
And shuddered cold as death, and through my
teeth

The breath came hissing, and I could not speak—
I knew not why—not then—they knew, and
laughed ;

And they will laugh forever here in hell.

A second warning, and I heeded not.

If a third came, it passed me by unseen,

For heart, mind, soul, and life were gathered up

In one blind stubborn will, one desperate hope,

To do some deed—as yet I knew not what—

And then the Master must reveal himself.

The deed ! the deed ! It hunts me like a hound ;

Tracks me all day through lonely places ; lurks

In every passer’s eye ; and in the night

Drives me to bay, and slays me—with a kiss !

Back, fiend of hell ! Thine hour is not yet come !

My eyes grow dim—or else the day is dark.
I should be moving on. Hist ! Some one comes.
My limbs are grown too stiff, I cannot fly.
His mother and his friends—they must not see.

O mother, with thy heart nigh dead with woe !
And thou, whom he loved best—whom I had loved
Hadst thou but let me—do ye pass me by
Too deep in grief with all your weeping friends
To see the traitor Judas sitting here ?
Ay, pass ye on, for God himself forgets
To blast me with his lightning.

Late last night

I crept into the town to hear the end,
To know the worst. As I stole down the street
I met old Peter, and his eyes were wet.
He did not curse me then as all the rest—
He did but look and pass—yet his eyes said,
“ I pity you—not wholly worse than me.”

Not worse than me ! The blackest fiend of hell
Ne'er sold his master.—They are faithful—I—
Great God of heaven ! Why didst thou do this
thing ?

Why didst thou fashion Judas in the womb
To be a second bitterer curse on man?

O God, that grim dark night! I see't again!
We flare along the street with hideous noise—
The men I hate with faces hot for blood,
Cowards, all armed against one peaceful man!
There in the garden stands the man I know.
My King, my country's Saviour!—there he stands.
My hope flared up, I almost sang for joy.
Master, one touch, and then the slaves shall
reel.

Right boldly struck, old Peter, home, right home!
Then came the horrid silence—and that face—
So pale, so calm, with such a kingly frown.
No wrath, no self-assertion—only this—
“Judas! what, with a kiss?”—A kiss—Ah, God!

My head reels round. I'm cold. I cannot see.
My eyes are full of blood—I fall—I fall—
God, thou art merciful—death—death at last.


* * * * *

I must have swooned—See, blood upon my hand!

My garment rent and soiled—I thought 'twas death;
I hoped 'twas death—a change from pain to pain.

And now 'tis black as night. The day is done.

What means this horrid quaking ! All the earth
Seems smothered up in darkness, and a wind
Death-cold goes moaning by. O God ! that cry
Shrilled like a lost soul foundering in the night,
Shipwreck'd, forsaken—it echoed through my heart.
Or was't the earthquake's voice, whose wailing sound
Split the cold air, and shuddered to the stars ! . . .
Or did *he* call ? . . . and in a sore distress . . .
Master ! I come. Brother, awake ! awake !
'Tis time for moving onward. Wake, I say.
Thou hast slept long and well—'tis time to go.
. . . Alas, his hand is cold ; his head drops back
Too loosely on the grass ; and . . . is it so ?
Hast thou crept out from shadow of my life,
To find if haply there be sun elsewhere ?
And all the feverish pain of these sad days
Ended for thee forever ! Nevermore
Will any ask, " Judas, why dost thou weep ? "



Alas, fond heart, I could not make thee glad.
I had no joy to give thee—no, not one.
And if I laughed, my laughter made thee shrink
And tremble ; and my touch was cold, thou saidst,
As stones in winter. Yet I loved thee well :
At least thou knewest that—nay, thou didst know—
For thy sake and for hers who left us both
So lonely in the world—like shipwreck'd men
That drift all night upon a lonely sea,
Or shelterless beneath a burning sun
With thirstings sore, and hunger, till the wave
Shall cast them somewhere. Happier wast thou ;
Thou knewst not where it cast us—thee and me.
Thou shouldst have ta'en him, mother, when thou
wentst ;
Not left him here to wither. How could I
Rear such a tender flower? I, whose curse
Was ever to hurt most what most I loved.
Brother, good-night, I must be moving on.

Who bars my way when the King calls for me !
What art thou, standing there with muffled face ?
Hast thou no gayer garment than the sheet

That wraps the dead? Nay, stand not staring there.
Leave shaking of thy head. Disclose thyself.
I've drunk too deep of horror to fear thy face.
Nay, but thou shalt, I say, thou sheeted thing.

This is thy vengeance, God—'tis fallen at last!

Mother!—I knew thee not: I did not know
'Twas thou that stoodst there weeping—Alas, alas,
Do not the dead have quiet, and dream no dreams?—
Mother, there is the child thou gavest me.
See, he is dead—the little one thou lov'dst:
And Judas slew him. Curse me now, and pour
Thy bitter anguish on my head, and weep:
Thou canst not hate me as I hate myself.
Here is thy little one. See, how he smiles.
He did not hate me, mother, although my life
Made his life bitter, and darkened his short days.
O mother, have some pity. Dost thou not know,
E'en now, how I did love thee? Dost thou not see
How deep I am in pain? that my lost soul
Has slipped and fallen, and drags me down, down,
down,

As one who shrieks and falls in some wild dream?
Mother, upon my knees I pray thee now
For one last word of pity ere I go.
Or let thy hand rest on me not in wrath.
I am thy son ; and, as long years ago,
I knelt beside thy knee a little boy,
And wept to own my fault, and thou didst weep,
And, weeping, pardoned—see, again I kneel,
And pray for pardon, with these more bitter tears.

Nay, she is gone without one word, one touch,
One drop of pity on this wide sea of pain.

Ha ! ha ! they come ! they come—countless and
foul.

Hell, is thy gate ajar ? thy jailor slain ?
Thy graves all empty ? How they glare and run !
'Tis but a madman's dream. Hist ! one remains.

Art thou, too, come to curse me ? I have failed,
Ay, failed to save my country. But thou knowest,
Father, thou knowest 'twas not through lack of love.
Had I but loved her less, I had loved him more,

My Master—him whom even now the priests
Have dragged to death, betrayed by these red
hands,

Betrayed by these black lips that kissed the kiss.
. . . Hark, how the fiends laugh in the gulf of hell!
See how they come and lay their lips to mine,
And laugh and hiss, "Come, Judas, kiss thy kiss!"
That kiss, that kiss—and I, I needs must kiss
Till the scorched lips shrink shrivelling to the bone.
Canst thou not hear them? Nay, but laugh thou
too.

Judas himself will learn that laughter soon.
He needs must laugh—poor pitiful wise beast
Who slew his friend.

It was not to betray,
But to awake, to rouse his strength, that he—
After long weary waiting—might arise
And speak the words that make a country free.
. . . I am not clear. I think 'twas so. But now
My mind is dark; I cannot see the deed
As then I saw it—only see his face—
The pale sad face with such a kingly frown—
And hear the words, "What, Judas, with a kiss!"

. . . Do not the dead learn pity in the grave,
That thou shouldst curse me on the road to hell!
He did not curse me.

God! Have I gone mad?

They surely stood beside me whilst I spake—
My mother and my father? Has the brain
Burst with the wild intolerable throbs
That night and day are anguish?—Nay, it beats,
And throbs there still. The dark day has come
back.

My brother—whom I slew—I see thee there,
And on thy face the memory of a smile
That thou didst leave to cheer me. . . . My last
kiss.

The only heart that loved me in the world—
The only eyes that looked and did not know—
Dead, dead, ay dead: and safest so at last.
Shall I not meet thee when this deed is done?
This deed which I must do—which God forgets:
See thee, and hear thy voice—I who am damned?
Perhaps once in a hundred lives of men
Thy face a moment. Nay, I still have hope;

The smile thou left'st me gave't.

I know it, God—

I was too vile for thine avenging hand ;

Too vile for man's—for all men's—all save one.

All places were too holy save this place,

The perch of carrion birds, and foul with death—

The “field of blood.” It lies there dark below :

How oft it made me, passing as a boy,

Shudder and shrink ; and I, I knew not why.

To-night I know : to-night I shudder still.

O vile past hope. . . . Master, thou art avenged.

[*Leaps down.*

ON THE SHORE.

HER eyes were wild, her dark dishevell'd hair
Tossed struggling backward in the restless air ;

Her hands were pressed upon her breast,
And she stood gazing out to sea.

Ah me, ah me, didst hear that moan !

“ Alone, alone, O God ! alone !

Forever thus to be,

And outcast from the world and thee !

O God ! how long ! ”

Upon a cliff she stood and faced the sea.

A girl, so young and so alone—ah me !

And was it meet with fever'd feet

She should go wandering through the world !

So young, so young, without a home—

To roam, to roam, and still to roam—

And ever slip and fall,

As in a dream ; and though she call,

None heed her cry.

Poor simple woman's heart, thy sin was all
Wrung from thy gentle trust, and paid with gall.

Thou hadst to learn how he could spurn,
And she, thy mother, turn from thee.

Alone, alone in this wild roar,

No more, no more, ah nevermore

To lose thy father's scorn,

Thy righteous brother's curse !—forlorn

Indeed art thou.

Woe is thee now that ever thou wast born.

Woe, woe—from evening until morn

One changeless pain—and lo ! again

From morn till eve the self-same woe :

And still, and still that voice : “ No more,

No more, no more, ah nevermore ! ”

No hope of rest save one.

One pain, and then thy pain all done ;

And God so near !

Awhile she stood, her face so sad and wan,

And watched the wave, thinking of days far gone—

Of her lost child—then, as she smiled

Her lips seemed moving as in prayer.

For him, for *him*?—God hears that moan,

“My own, my own, I come, my own.”

He sees and knows ;—for hear,

A bird slips down and cries round there,—

Then all is still.

A MAIDEN'S PRAYER.

Love, when the blushing eastern sky

Has bared her bosom to the sun ;

Just when you know the day is nigh,

That night is done ;

Just when the night-winds cease their sigh,

To whisper to the smiling sea,

Dream of me, then, and know that I

Still dream of thee !

Or when fierce Noon, with wings outspread,

Is towering in the mid-day sky ;

When timid Nature bends her head,

So sweet and shy !

O ! when Creation's languid tread
From out the trees comes weariedly,
Think of me then ; though hope were dead,
I live for thee !

Or, when the Earth with shy-sweet glow
Has doffed her dainty robe of light,
And whispering hand-maids o'er her throw
The veil of night ;

O ! then perchance may gentler grow
Stern thoughts that held thy soul from me,
And in the silence whisper low
My prayer for thee !


MORN.

A FRAGMENT.

Lo ! all a-blush from maiden sleep
Stept fair-haired Morn ;—and there did peep
One dimpled shoulder from its screen
Of draped snow. Full fair I ween

Her forehead was ; her white breasts sweet
Did kiss half-hid ; her silver feet
Tript lightly o'er the piled cloud,
And lo ! she sang, but scarce aloud,
Such little song as mounts and dies,
For half the words were in her eyes.
And lovingly she called the sun,
Who, loath his daily course to run,
Blinkt in the east, and lazily
Stretched his long rays across the sea.
But at her voice, straight up he leapt ;
The mist in foam right back he swept ;
And striding forth in majestie,
Great-hearted king, all plenteously
His royal bounties round him hurled
In glorious largesse o'er the world.
And full soon at his face again
Sad Heaven smiled ; and dried the rain
Of dewy tears all night which fell
O'er sinful earth she loveth well.
She dried her tears, and turned to greet
Bright Nature, who, with laughter sweet, :

Awakened by the minstrelsie
Of gladsome birds, stept daintily
From off her couch ; her lustrous hair
With lavish wealth lit all the air,
And, like rain dashed on budding flowers,
Adown her breast fell all in showers.
Then, bending to the enamoured god
In shy obeisance, o'er the sod
She coyly went, all trembling sweet—
The hare-bells swooned about her feet.
And reaching soon a moss-clad bank,—
That gently sloped, then downward sank
To greet, as though 'twere in a dream,
The soft embracements of a stream
With half-heard kiss,—she stood awhile
And child-like gazed with wondering smile
On that fair beauty, which the wave
Swooning through love, to her re-gave
In clear reflection ;—and there she,
In clear low tones of harmonie,—
As plaintive-sweet as ever filled
The summer woods with echoings trilled




In fitful minstrelsie ; or pined
Rising and dying on the wind—
Calling her nymphs, that all anear
Lay in the long grass listlessly
Dreaming of gods,—and drowsily
Their heads on their white arms were laid,—
She wakened them, and her limbs bade
Lave in the stream wherein she stood,
Watched by the branches of the wood,
And whose soft ripple lovingly
A suppliant clasped her round the knee.

TWILIGHT.

O'ER the fair face of coy sweet smiling Earth,
Still all aglow with the Sun's parting kiss,
Her dainty handmaids drew the veil of night,
Softly and slowly ; and as in a dream,
With long dusk trailing garments, and with eyes
Glowing like stars beneath their golden hair,
They moved ; and ever as they moved they sang
In low mysterious murmurs some strange song

Of love and death, or some sad wandering woe.
And ever and anon they struck their hands
Along their golden harps, and woke therefrom
Strange cries and wails of music ; till their limbs,
Swayed by the mystic motion of the sound,
Did float and fall in such mute ecstasy,
That every movement seemed a gust of song,
And every limb a floating melody.
Then grew their motion gradually slow ;
And softer grew their voices ; while sweet Earth,
Lapped in the drowsy sweep of moving limbs,
And lulled by murmuring words, lay half asleep,
And falling, falling into dreams. And still
The darkness gathered round them more and more ;
And grey and greyer grew they as they moved ;
And distant seemed their voices and their song.
Till last, when Earth was wholly wrapt in sleep,
And lay with quiet face turned towards the moon,
Hushing their voices to a last farewell,
With the soft noise of wings they passed from sight.



AFTER FAILURE.

YOUTH, Disappointment, and that fatalist
Debauching Idleness abide with me ;—
They three are plotting how my soul to twist,
And bind it in a dread deformity.

For Youth to help me oft in vain doth try ;
But Disappointment holds him with his eye,
And stares him down till he is nigh despair ;
And Idleness then whispers in his ear
Fancies that send his hot blood bounding free,
And all his love from me seems like to tear.

So I sit silent, smiling bitterly—
And, reckless, still see ever standing there
A pallid hateful thing that I might be ;
And, pointing back, it ever mutters, "See !"

WHAT THE RIVER SANG.

COME ye streams from out the meadows !

Gather ! gather as I flee !

And I'll waft your whispers softly,

Softly waft them to the sea !

Through the valley, foaming, dashing,

I have come with merry glee ;

Leapt the rocks and splash'd the fern-leaves,

Caught the blossoms from the tree :

Caught and bore [~] them on my bosom,

Onward through the little town,

Where I tossed them to a maiden

With her pitcher stooping down.

Onward, brimming through the meadows,

I have sipped the early dew,

Kissed the rosebuds, rocked the lilies,

Heard the skylark as I flew !

Onward ! onward ! on forever !

Onward still, forever free !

Calling, crying, " Leave your weeping,
Come, ye waters, madly leaping,
Toss and tumble to the sea !"

Leave your whispering 'neath the willows !
Gather round me as I flee !
Rivers ! rush to join me swiftly,
Swiftly rushing to the sea !

LOVE IN THE SOUTH.

A SERENADE.

O LOVE ! see the moonlight is sleeping
On meadow, on valley, on hill !
Through the pale mists the starlight is peeping,
The whole world is still !

The world is asleep and lies dreaming ;
The rill seeks its rest in the sea,
And its voice has a tender love-seeming,
A voice, love, for thee !

With love all its pulses are thronging,
Half-afraid that such joy cannot be ;
And it trembles all white with its longing
Ere 't leaps with a sob to the sea !

Ay, all have their rest ; am I, weary
With storm, and a whirlwind of rain,
To wander through wastes, dark and dreary,
And poisoned with pain ?

Ah, see ! my heart, trampled and bleeding
'Neath the passionate footsteps of love,
Is wild with the pain of its pleading,
Is faint for thy face from above !

O love ! love ! my all, and my only !
My star 'midst the tempest of days !
Break forth, for the heavens are lonely,
And sad for thy rays !


O love ! love ! lean forth from thy bower !
Through the clouds flash thy light all along !
That my dreams may burst forth into flower,
My soul into song !

FORLORN.

A LITTLE while, a little while,
A little time before I die !
Ah, God ! a little space to smile
Between the earth and sky !
A little hush amidst the strife,
That drives me on from worse to worse ;
Until my life is half a curse,
And half a piteous hungry cry !

A little time, a little time,
A little space before I die !
Ah, God ! is love so great a crime
Between the earth and sky !
Might I not love a little space—
One little hour 'twixt pain and pain ?
Or is disgrace my only gain ?
My only speech a helpless cry !

A moment yet, a moment yet,
A little time before I die !



O ! but one moment to forget
Between the earth and sky !
To lose this bitter sense of wrong ;
This torture of what might have been !
Or make me strong to face my sin !
Or let me die, or let me die !

FAREWELL !

Nor that I dread the wonder and the way !
Not that I think the whole wide world can prove
A barrier thrust between me and thy love,
So strong, but evermore at death of day
The winds will tell me of thy lengthened stay,
The sad waves whisper of the past and thee !
Not that I fear that any change can be
In thy strong love !—not therefore grief hath sway.

But because now I know how above blame
Our love has been ;—our souls at gaze have stood
Naked at noon-day, and yet felt no shame.
O because I have loved thee—past reclaim
Of silence—therefore, therefore my heart's blood
Fails me at farewell, uttering half I would.

THE TRYST.

TREMBLING she waiteth in the lonesome wood,
Beside a fount, whose faint mysterious sound
Scarce stirreth midst the stillness all around
Of tall straight trees ;—and now in listless mood
Plucketh a rose ; and as its leaves fall strewed
Along the flood, thinketh, “ Ah, will he come ? ”
But all the voices of the wood are dumb ;
Nought moveth audibly except the flood.

She standeth listening, soothly fain to flee,
Yet having trust ;—till smiteth on her ear
A sudden rustling o’er the dead leaves near ;
Then silence for a space ;—then verily
A footstep on the grass ;—with one great fear
Leapeth her heart !—when lo ! there standeth he !

IN DAYS OF REVOLUTION.

LORD of all sound, and sweetest voiced of singers !

For whom the words come like the flooding sea,
For whom the rolling thunder's strength still
lingers,

The glory and the glow that used to be !
For whom the murmurs and the sad-sweet moanings,
The half-heard anguish of an unknown woe,
For whom the bursts, the sobs, and bitter groanings,
The storms and tides of passion surge and flow !

Heart of all hearts, the most beset and daring !

Soul of all souls most longing to be free !
How shall I dare, amidst the trumpets' blaring,
Sing thee a song whose songs are as the sea !
Yet I, e'en I, because the brain is burning,
Yet I, e'en I, because the thoughts will thrill,
Rise, and lift up a voice of eager yearning,
Strike on the strings, although the voice be
shrill !

I, lo I wept o'er words that thou hadst spoken,
I, lo I grieved o'er taunts that thou hadst flung;
Better the harp at day-dawn had been broken!
Better a silence than the words that stung.
Ay, so I wept: but lo! there rose a singing,
From out the tempest a clear voice of song,
A clarion sound of music wildly ringing,
A trumpet-burst for freedom sent along!

I too was watching in the outer darkness,
With wan face waiting for the tarrying day;
I only saw the grim night's cruel starkness,
I heard the owls hoot, and the bloodhounds
bay.

I cried, "O is it long before the dawning?"
"O brothers, dawn is there at all to be?"
I only heard the hoot o' the night owl's scorning;
The cries of men and beasts that fight and flee!

"Is there no God to hear the nations' crying?
Nought that has pity in the dumb dead sky?
No hand to stretch out to the dead and dying,
Trampled and trodden for a foolish lie?"

Lord, it is time that men should cease from battle !

The earth is thine, Lord, and the wide wide sea !
Stretch forth thine hand to stay the din and rattle !
The dark of death is on us, and we cry to thee !”


Was it a dream ?—or did the darkness quicken

With form and feature of a coming day ?
Came there no flash from where the thick clouds
thicken,

No stir of voices but the wild winds’ play !
Nay but I heard, I saw—despite the distance,
The mother standing, with the face I knew,
With arms outstretched, and with a wild insistence,
High on the heights against the central blue !

Nay, did she speak,—or was the silence shaken

With pulse and passion of that pleading heart ?
I know not—but I know the air was taken
Afire with flaming words in every part !
Scarce could I bear the mother’s face entreating,
But that I knew who dares look, though he die,
Henceforth forever through the wild years’ fleeting
Cares not for life or death, but will not lie !



Hark ! through the night I heard a trumpet calling !

The dark was riven with a cry and torn !

Far, far to eastward through the thick clouds falling

Flashed the first long rays of the coming dawn !

Lo ! from the hills there came a voice of thunder,

And through the valleys like a rushing sea,

With noise of mighty mountains rent asunder,

The tramp of nations marching to be free !

Clearer, more near, with fuller, louder growing

Thunder of voices, and with echoing feet

Down on the plain the nations swept, and, flowing,

Mingled their torrents where the valleys meet !

Gathered and stood as far as eye's commanding,

With faces flashing to its utmost parts,

And in their midst I saw the mother standing

Ringed with the throbbing of the whole world's
hearts !

Was it a dream this, then ? or was't a vision

Full of the future and the things to be ?

Were all the sweet thoughts with their swift incision

But echoes of an emptiness in me ?

Nay, but I know the mother now is near us,
With fond eyes pleading, had we seeing eyes,
Did we but dare, despite the claws that tear us,
Rise and be true, despite the world's surprise !

Therefore I come—tho' scarce I speak for weeping
Tears half of sorrow and the half of joy,—
And humbly lay this where thy garment sweeping
May chance to touch it e'er the wind destroy.
Faint though it be, and though the words may falter,
My heart is throbbing with thy freeman's song ;
What though the sky be dark, the clouds will alter ;
The dawn is coming, though the night be long !

FAME.

WHAT is it that I long for? To be known?
That, when some hundred years have passed
away,
Then some strange writer, writing down, may say,
"This man here thought and suffered ; we must own
His worth so much?"—Ay, never mind the groan—

That two glad lovers in the twilight grey
Of some new summer, pausing from their play,
May read awhile in silence my dead moan?

And this at best. My soul, let us have done
With fame. It cannot heal thee of thy woe!
It cannot help thee when night draweth on!
Have done with dreams; and this thing surely
know, *thy self is*
~~That~~ Only ~~thou art~~ thine;—use thyself so;
Thou wilt be thou beyond the setting sun!

REMONSTRANCE.


CROUCH not behind me, Death, at point to spring,
But strike me on the face when it is time
Boldly, and speak the strong word. Is't a crime
That thou shouldst creep and crawl to do such thing?
Nay, Death, I fear thee not—thou canst not wring
One cry of pain. For me, thou knowest well,
Thou hold'st no horror of an ageless hell,
Albeit small hope of heaven thou mayest bring!

Nay, Death, we should be friends—I'd have it so,
So thou would'st face me. Life is not so dear
Thou need'st be jealous ;—yet I love life too.
Thou hold'st so much I long have longed to know ;
So much I love, I fain would have thee near.
Come, Death, and tell me what thy Shaksperes do.

EPIMETHEUS.

My life is with the dead ;—the dying years
Hold nought for me of wonder, joy, or woe.
Their darts are vain to reach me in the glow
Of long dead summers ;—vain where fever'd fears
And stricken hopes are silent ; where the tears
And thorn-crowned face of sorrow do but show
A surer kingship ;—and the sweet full flow
Of Godlike speech is heard, as when one hears

A brown bird in the pauses of the night
Thrill the ecstatic stillness ;—and the bird
We love for sheer soul's sake. So in the light
Of those still days soul dwells with soul ; half
heard



Dante and Homer through the dim land fare,
Or Shakspeare's voice breaks on the quiet air.

PARTING.

NAY, sweet, I fear not that thy love will change
In the new life ; nor that thou'lt take for him
From out my love. Nay, rather to the brim
Thy love is filled up, sweet, through all its range.
And yet—I read thy joy, and can but weep !
Ah love ! have I not seen by my heart's light
The heart's pain in thine eyes ; all through the
night
Stood watching by thy sobs and broken sleep ?

And now the day is come ; the ivory gate
Bares wide its glorious joy to welcome thee.
No longer with droop'd wing disconsolate,
And eyes all wet with tears, thou'lt wait with me.
The time is come. Go, sweet—God gives thee
love,
And crowns thee with the crown of crowns thereof !

TO MY LADY.


A LULLABY.

My lady sleeps !—Ye breezes gently blow,
And hover round her temples tenderly ;
And lift the lustrous length of hair for me ;
And whisper, whisper softly what ye know.

My lady sleeps !—Go, gentle wind and say,
“ He stands and watches while his lady sleeps : ”
Tell her, in silence a glad hour he keeps ;
But whisper, whisper softly as ye may !

My lady sleeps !—I would not she should know
The restless pain of this too eager love :
Sleep on, dear heart ! and spirits from above
Float down, float down, and whisper faint and low !

My lady sleeps !—Down steals each silent star ;
And each to each gives greeting of sweet light ;
The holy moon glides out into the night ;
And angel-voices whisper faint and far.



My lady sleeps!—and round her and above
Float gentle thoughts on softly-rustling wings.
Sleep on, dear heart—and dream that all glad
things
Still whisper, whisper softly of my love !

DEATH IN YOUTH.

TAKE me and bury me, for I am dead !
Trample the earth about me, lest I think
The hands and head and face I held so dear
Are slowly, slowly changing, O my God !

Horror, O worse than death, that huntest down
My stricken heart to that grim festering grave,
Call back thy dogs a little while, and give
One little, little hour for pain to breathe.

Nelly, my little Nell, I linger still
Round the old elm-trees, where there seem to stir
Voices of dead days sadly whispering,
And asking, asking why thou art not here ?


Yet it is only the sad wind that stirs
Drifts of dead leaves and waifs of summer time ;
Dead is the face which used to wander here,
And never, nevermore that face will smile !

Nelly, my Nelly, love, my one, my all !
My darling lost for ever, why didst thou
Leave me alone within this dark and pain ?
Alone, alone forever, though I die !

Sleeping I dream of thee, my little Nell !
Waking I wander where thou art no more :
O love, my heart is breaking with the pain
I never never now thy voice shall hear !

Nelly, my own lost Nell, I cannot weep !
My eyes are done with tears, my heart with love !
My heart is breaking, and I cannot live !
'Tis breaking, breaking, and I cannot die !

I cannot live, for life to me is death :
I cannot die, for fear the darkness there
Should hide the memory of what once has been ;
Should rob me, rob me of my little Nell !



Past thou art all to me, and Future nought !
Past thou art full of hope,—the rest, despair ;
Despair and broken love ;—O ! love, thou art
So bitter, bitter,—yet I would not change !

I sit and wonder, thinking of the end ;
I strive to pierce into the years to be ;
But all is dark—I know not what they hold
But dark and death, and pain of unshed tears.

A DEAD FACE.


O **LITTLE** face that meets me in my dreams !
O little hands that rest here on my head
With strange impressive quiet ! Do the dead
Send you at last in greeting ? Or but gleams
Some old lost memory from my life—the beams
Of some quick star which left the world more
dark
As it fled outward—whilst the care and cark
Grew colder, closer ? Now, ah God, it seems

But yesterday when one such little face
To me was more than God ! When such a store
Of bliss those small hands held, poor fool, I swore
I would enrich the world ! It passed. The trace
Lies ruined through my life. God said, " thy place
Is with the weepers. Go, be glad no more ! "

THE SONG OF THE SIREN.

COME down from the rocks where the wild wind is
moaning ;
Come down to the sands, where the waves washing
free,
Full anthems of joy from their depths are entoning ;
O hasten ! O hasten ! Love, leap down to me !

Long, long hast thou wander'd, lost, wayworn and
weary ;
The world has no place for thy love or for thee !
For the hopes that are dead, and the heart that is
dreary !
O hasten ! O hasten ! Love, leap down to me !



What know'st thou of life? 'Tis a pain and a
yearning

For things that are dead, or that never could be.

What know'st thou of death? It is dust to dust
turning ;

Then hasten ! O hasten ! Love, leap down to me !

There waits thee a body all fragrant, caresses

For thee when thou'rt weary—'twas framed, love,
for thee !

I'll make thee a shield from the storm with these
tresses ;

Then hasten ! O hasten ! Love, leap down to me !

Leap, leap to this bosom that longs for thy blessing.

'Tis sweet as the sea-winds, and pure as the sea :

These arms shall enfold thee with fragrant caressing,

And hush thee to slumber — O ! leap down to
me !

Ah ! love, see I weep—I am faint with great
longing ;

The sea-gods may call, but I pant, love, for thee !

Come quickly, O love !—See ! the wild waves are thronging !—

They clutch me ! O leap, love, I'm dying for thee !

Thou'rt fairest, O fair one, and bright are thy tresses ;
Thy limbs are all fragrant with scent of the sea ;
And I, I am weary—and sweet thy caresses !
But love, thou art no love ! I'll not leap to thee !

I am faint, I am foot-sore, and fain for my resting.
The world has no home for my love, or for me.
But still my sad heart, 'gainst the world's tempest
breasting,
Has no thought but pity, O fair one, for thee !

Ay, life is a pain—but a *man's* life fails never ;
And hope is the bride that I choose before thee :
High, high above pain rules the strong soul for
ever !—
For man, not man's love, still to work let it be !

AN OFFERING.

Love, lying here at your feet,
I, looking up at your eyes,
Here, in the sight of the skies,
Think, what were offering meet
To give?—as the sun slowly dies,
I, lying here at your feet.

Love, looking up at your eyes,
I think—were 't an offering meet,
To conquer, and lay at her feet
Wealth of all India's rich dyes,
All wonders, and things that are sweet—
I, looking up at her eyes?

Love, lying here at your feet,
I, looking up at your eyes,—
Lighted with light of the skies,—
Knowing no offering meet,
Can lay but my heart, ere it dies,
And love of you, love, at your feet !
E


WEARIED.

LEAVE me alone !
The days drive on apace ;
The years wax old and die,
And leave no trace.
Leave me alone !

Leave me alone !
What matters it to me
What chance or hope men try ?
What change may be ?
Leave me alone !

Leave me alone !
Nay, friends, ye waste your breath ;
Nor change, nor hope for me,
But change of death !
Leave me alone !

Leave me alone !
Awhile, and all is done ;



All pain will cease to be
At set of sun.
Leave me alone !

Leave me alone !
I thought the world had scope
For love, and earnest men,
For work and hope !
Leave me alone !

Leave me alone !
The world must have its way ;
Must slay, or love—what then ?
It chooses slay !
Leave me alone !


THE OLD HOME ACROSS THE SEA
BROKEN UP.

AND so once more a bright dream of my life,
With piteous cry, and helpless hands held out,
Slips wailing down the black abyss of time ;
Slips down, and leaves me on th' unpitying brink.

Dust unto dust—dreams unto dreams—and life
A means to feel the bitter sting of death.
For this we live—to see our best dreams die ;
Die, die, and die, until at last we stand
Alone amidst a trackless ruined waste.
Naked we came, and naked shall we go.

Is this then all? To love, and see love die?

O ! home of childhood, we are parting now !
O ! loved and hoped-for, we are parting now !
I sit and think I nevermore shall roam
About thy silent places as of old ;
I nevermore shall dream of loved ones there.



The Old Home across the Sea broken up. 69

My home amidst the sunny clust'ring trees !
My home with murmuring stream and garden plot !
My home with giant mountains, and deep shade,
With strange sweet voices at the death of day,
With myriad song of birds, and boyhood's dreams !
We're parting, parting, nevermore to meet !

Henceforth I have no home, no resting place ;
No well-known spot one day to lay my head.
The past breaks from me which once held a home,
And leaves me wandering on with blinded eyes,
A man—for whom his childhood now is done.

Hush ! do not wake the dead !—dust unto dust,
Dreams unto dreams !—Make smooth the quiet grave,
And softly shed a bitter tear, and go.


O hope ! O home ! O happy, happy past !
O longed-for with a deep long-sundered love !
'Tis bitter, bitter parting with you thus !

I stretch my hands across the dark, and cry,
“ Ah, one last look ! one word ! ”—I only hear
The hollow darkness shaken with my cry.

70 The Old Home across the Sea broken up.

I sit and think I nevermore shall hear
My father's step along the gravel walk,
My sisters' voices in the morning room :
I weep and think I nevermore shall see
My mother midst the roses by the door.
No longer shall the grand old gnarled tree
Afford us sport and shelter with its roots ;
Where we as boys oft piled the drifted leaves,
To lie and listen to the rush of wind
Amidst its giant branches. From the hill
I nevermore shall see my brothers ride
Between the canefields to the dusty road ;
Nor hear their shouts borne upwards by the breeze.
Henceforth a stranger rules among the woods.
The startled house shall echo to his voice
With ghost-like mutterings—a stranger's foot
Shall tread the earth as it were common clay,
And made for common uses ! He shall cut,
And prune, and change, as though he were a
God !

Let loose the axes on the well-known trees !
Let in the sunlight on the holy shade !
Until the fiends in Tophet laugh for glee,—



The Old Home across the Sea broken up. 71

And in the night a bitter cry is heard,
A fond heart wailing o'er the past it knew.

Wake not the dead to see its trampled grave !
Speak no more words to wake the bitter pain !

And yet—and yet—it cannot surely die !
It was, it is too much a part of me,
That while I live the past should wholly die !
Of what I am, but that at even time,
When the dim shadows lengthen on the ground,
When tired winds move softly through the leaves,
And the spent day is dying in the west,
Some voices still shall whisper through the gloam,
Of rest, and peace, and happy days gone by ;—
And I shall dream of things that once I saw,
And thank God humbly that they once have been.

Nay, life holds more than death, and change, and
woe ;
Is not all vile ;—it holds this one thing love :
And love is love, although the loved one die ;—
And still there is this left—remembering.

STRONGER THAN DEATH.

A SMALL bird sang to me through all the spring,
"Love, love, all, all is love!"—with sweet wild
note,

And strange sweet tremblings of wings and throat,
And trills of quivering joy. And when each thing
Grew to a rich ripe summer, with a wing

Grown bolder now, and with a throat more strong,
It rose and soared, until with bursts of song
It flooded all things : and still each note's ring

Was "love, ah, love!" With autumn grew the tone
More sober ; and when winter came I said,

"See, Death has come, will love then live alone ?

Nay, all things die, and so Love too is dead !"
When suddenly a bird sang where I stood,
And lo ! its breast was stained with stains of blood.

"A NYMPH PRAYING TO CUPID."

(A Picture by GREUZE.)

JUST where the wood's shade lessened for a space,
And the trees whispering shrank back half afraid,
A little timorous nymph knelt down and prayed;
With pleading hands, and wistful upturned face,
And child-like eyes scarce lifted, where the place
Was hushed in wonder round the wingèd Love,
She knelt; and lo! the soft light from above
Fell where the fluttering heart had bared her grace.

A winsome little maid, pure-white and fair—
Half bold, half timorous-trusting;—part she
smiled,
And part she blushed her little eager prayer;
And part she breathed, as when the woodland
wild
Stirs with soft winds at even. And watching there
The trees bent down and pleaded for their child.


HOPE IN YOUTH.

ONLY a little while to live and love ;
 Only a little while that all my soul
May breathe itself into a life, whereof
 It dreams that perfect life is love made whole.

Only a little while, until the life
 Burn through the cloud, and I at last be I ;
Only a little while before the strife
 Crush on my heart and trample, till it die !

Only a little while, until there grow
 From out the might-be a sure thing that is ;
And all the passion of hope's overflow
 Become a strength, and strength itself be bliss.

Only this little, for a little while ;
 And then the end may come—I shall not fear.
And Death will stand and greet me with a smile :
 I shall not tremble when his voice I hear.



THE END.

THE weary day is drawing to a close ;
The weary life is ebbing out at last ;
The fever ceases ; and the bitter blast
Of death to me comes cool—as breeze that blows
Across the height we've climbed ; whence outward
glows

The grand immensity of trackless sea.
So on the heights of death blows cool on me
A wind from ocean ways that no man knows.

Rest after toil ! Ah ! God, thou know'st 'tis sweet.
Thou know'st I did not murmur in the heat
And pain of action : though mine eyes still turned
To where my hope stood waiting at thy feet.


Thou know'st I trusted thee ;—though hot tears
burned,—

And me—the world I loved had laughing spurned.

HIC.

I SAT me down upon the silent shore,
And watched alone until the sun should die :
And heard the silence of the night draw nigh,
And gather round me, threatening. And the roar
Of earth I heard fall dead.—Yet evermore
There came a low sad moaning from the sea,
The last dumb sound of hopeless misery,
And grim late knowledge of the end in store.

And there I bowed me to the earth and wept ;
And all the world's great failure was my own ;
And cried to God to crush us—whilst there swept
Across my soul a whirling wind of pain ;—
That showed what God had meant—what man
had grown—
In heart and feature wholly one with Cain.



ILLE.

I MET the dawn upon the waking hills ;
The birds were trilling out their morning song ;
And through the deep wet grass, and all along
The rocky slopes I heard a thousand rills
Gurgling their music ;—while with sudden thrills
The winds gave singing voices to the trees ;
And out the valleys rose, with hum of bees,
Glad human voices singing towards the mills.

And I stood up and sang. And through my soul
Throbbled the deep music at the heart of things :
And thoughts that knew no words took sudden
wings,
And soared through all the years—beyond control
Of time or pain—till at the utmost goal
They found Creation where she sits and sings !

WORDSWORTH.

BRAVE-HEARTED poet, we have need of thee !
Need of thy quiet and thy steadfastness !
Need of thy silent courage in the stress
And strain of living ; sorest need to see
In the work's self the truest gain must be
For all true workers :—we who still would press
All truth from life with our self-consciousness,
And cannot live for thinking of this “ me.”

Wordsworth ! thy songs the years shall not destroy !
Thou gav'st thy heart to Nature,—she is strong.
Hark ! the world's echoes still thy name employ ;
From mouth to mouth thy message rolls along !
‘ A true man's life is still his noblest song,
Ay ! and true hope the highest thing in joy ! ’

EARTH'S VOICE.

I HEARD, what time the angels wake their song,
The deep resounding voice of this fair world
Leap out through space, and, through the darkness
hurled,

Clash to the midst of that full-throated throng,
Which tread the heavens with motions swift and
strong,

And most majestic voices. And I heard,
Whilst the stars trembled, the loud greeting word
Through the orchestral thunder leap along.

Then did the music swell, until it grew
The heart of things, and gave them utterance ;
And wondrous voices came from rocks, and
plants,


And winds, and waves, and smallest drops of dew ;—
Till, as one song through all the wide expanse,
Rang myriad voices gathering as they flew.

IN MEMORIAM L. C.

SHE whom we loved is dead, and lieth there ;
And in our pain we cannot think the thought
 " She hath her rest,"—for weeping cannot hear
 The angels' voices lifted in their song—
The greeting to the dauntless soul that fought
 With weariness, and smiled at pain so long.

She whom we loved is dead ;—we may no more
Hear the brave word, despite the feeble tone,
 Bidding be brave. We shall not from the door
 See the kind face between the rifts of pain
Smiling its welcome, like a sun that shone
 Through parted clouds,—that will not meet again.

Hers was a spirit through the house that moved
Unconsciously, of purest womanhood ;
 A simple quiet hopefulness, which proved
 The presence of a soul that had been taught
The noblest aim of all is others' good,
 The noblest hope, the hope of selfless thought.



How shall we grieve for her whom we have
laid

With sorrowing hands within the quiet earth ?

Shall we go weep upon the mound we've made,

And call her by her name ;—and even so

Proclaim we knew not what her life was worth,

By dallying long time with a selfish woe ?

Nay, let us rather dry our tears, and go

Forth to the world with hearts made strong by
love ;

Nay, let us spend no idle time in woe,

But pass forth with our hearts made strong to
bear,

Knowing that she has lived,—the thought whereof

Shall make us bold thro' many a distant year.

Rest after toil !—ah, know we not 'tis sweet,

When evening shadows lengthen on the ground,

And all the day is weary on its feet,

To pass at length unto the hard-won ease

With those we love, and fall asleep with sound

Of sad winds moving softly thro' the trees !

Then let us not with weeping spoil the sleep,
That comes at length after the weary day ;
Let us no longer by the sad mound keep,
But, with hushed voices, let us say " good-night,"
And so have done with sorrow, that we may
At dawn go forward to a sterner fight.

THE COMING OF SUMMER.

I SAT at the window, and gazed on the road,
Where a small stream of passers now ebbed and
now flowed ;
And I thought : " Is it summer with them as with
me ?
Have they seen the wind strike on the corn like a sea,
" And drive the gold surf and the shadowy waves
On the shingles of green ? Do they know where the
caves
In the forest are formed of the quivering leaves ?
Where the sunlight breaks through, and what
shadows it weaves ?

“Ah God ! Have they heard thy birds sing? Have
they seen

Thy wonderful thrush? with the nightingales been?
Have they lain on the ground, and gazed up at the
trees,

And felt the earth throb,—and the joy of the breeze?

“Have they crouched in the fern by a stream, and
kept still

To hear what it said, as it leapt from the hill?
What it cried to the sea as it leapt to the foam?
By the river's green edge do they know the swans'
home?”

I thought: “Is it summer with them as with me?
Have they watched the light flash on a sun-smitten
sea,

And die into grey, as the sun slowly dies?
And the stars make a wonder of all the wide skies?”

And the joy of the summer came down on me then,
And filled all the air, as I gazed on those men;
And all my blood trembled; and then I was ware,
O Earth! how thy summer had circled me there!

FAREWELL.

COME, let us go, my songs ! she will not hear.

Nay, though we sang our soul out to her face
With swan-like singing, and so fell dead there—

She would not listen, and in her high place
She would not shed a single pitying tear.

COME, let us go ; she hath not any heart

For such as we, who when we love must sing ;
She hath not any pity for the smart

Of love,—that lay a bare defenceless thing,
And prized itself no whit, and had no art.

Nay, but it had no art, for it was love ;

And saw its radiant image in her eyes,
And dreamed itself on earth, and her above,

A single star that shone midst darkening skies ;
And worshipped her, and sang its song thereof.

And yet she would not hear, nor turn on me
The wonder of her face, for all my song.
She could not tell the sound was of a sea,
That murmurs in its caves, and yet is strong,
That throbs beneath the moon, and yet is free.

Love free as winds that o'er the oceans blow ;
Strong as the deepset fountains of the flood ;
Yet humble in its strength, and bending low
Before a wonder of pure womanhood—
That seemed love's perfect dream—and is not so.

O eyes, whose lifted light shone like a star !
O little hands, brimful of love's soft speech !
O dream of love ! we're parting now, and far
Far off I hear to verge of time's dim reach
My sad dreams murmuring of the days ye mar.

Let us go hence ; and haply, made more wise,
Sorrow shall point us yet love's truer scope ;—
Yet O fair dream ! O face ! O wondrous eyes !
'Tis bitter parting thus at death of hope,
With love's one star thus blotted from the skies.

86 *On the Banks of the Wharf.*

Last night I dream'd that down the glimmering years
I gazed, and saw a face alone and sad,
With cheeks all pale, and eyes made soft with tears,
And lips, that, singing, seemed small joy they had
In some old song that still sad memory hears.

Nay, let us cease, my songs ! our singing time
Is ended with the end of day's sweet dreams ;
The hour has struck ; and in its solemn chime
A voice I hear—that in the stillness seems
To whisper sorrow may make life sublime.

ON THE BANKS OF THE WHARF.

AMIDST its rocks the river leaps,
And laughs along its grassy brim ;
Across the leaves the soft air sweeps
With wandering whim ;
The skylark in the clear sun keeps
Mounting and singing, glad and free—
But in my heart the old joy sleeps—
'Tis night with me.

I cannot feel the fresh pure day
As once I felt ; the joy is gone
From out the birds' song where I stray,
Forbid, forlorn.
The wind-stirred trees have nought to say,
They rustle unmysteriously ;
Alas ! the golden hours grow grey—
'Tis night with me.

I am not old ; thou knowest well,
Dear God, I have not wasted life,
Nor feasted on the fruit of Hell,
And endless strife.
One hope I have in which I dwell,
To work my work as best may be —
And yet each hour now sounds a knell ;
'Tis night with me.

Dear God, where is the glory fled
From stream, from flower, from rock, from
hill ?
My heart within me lieth dead ;
They wake no thrill.

88 *On the Banks of the Wharf.*

They move me not ; dear God, a dread
 Dark shadow shroudeth all I see ;
And, where a splendour once was spread,
 'Tis night with me.

Alas ! it is no moonstruck fret,
 But bitter truth for me, whose dreams,
So loved so long, should fill me yet
 With golden gleams ;
And filled me ever, till fame set
 Its fire before my face,—to flee,
And spoil the hours with vain regret—
 'Tis night with me.

BEWILDERMENT.

WHAT is it, O my soul ! that troubles thee ?

What is it fills thee with such sad surmise ?

Why stand thy dreams so silent, and with eyes
Glowing with such a mute expectancy ?

Why seems the world so full of mystery ?

What message bring the night-winds from their
home,

Canst thou not tell ?—Or why thou lov'st to
roam

In desert places by the sad sad sea ?

In vain, in vain I question :—half in fear

I move midst men as one in sleep, and peer

Into the faces of the passers by,

With all my face athrob—to find what there ?

But when my soul would speak it can but cry,

“ I know not, O I know not, no not I ! ”

LISTLESSNESS.

I SAT me down upon a flowery bank,
 'Twixt sun and shade, beside a murmuring
 stream ;

And, half-asleep, I heard as in a dream
The ripple kiss the shore ;—ah ! then there sank
Sweet quiet on my soul ; and mine ears drank
 Strange whispers from the trees ; and where a
 beam

Fell through the moving leaves, my lips did seem
Surely to feel warm love-lips' trembling prank

My mouth with timorous kisses ; or the breeze
 Showering the sunlight on me, surely then
Her hair fell round my face. So, while time flees,
 I love to lie alone, half-dreaming, when
 The far-off toil, the weary noise of men
Sound like soft murmurs from far distant seas.

BRIDAL.

O PURE white blossom from my tree of dreams !
That flowered still, and yet could bear no fruit—

But now in sweeter hope hath taken root—

O fairer than the flower that on smooth streams
Sleeps in its beauty ; and, like beauty, seems

Too wonderful for touch of such soiled hands !

O vision of the dawn when first she stands
Upon the hills amidst her wakening beams !

I hear the birds' song, and I know 'tis spring ;

I hear the lambs bleat ; and the bursting trees
Break forth in blossom :—yet to me each thing

Is symbol but of thee, to whom my knees
Are bent, O love ! as when some bird's white wing
Heralds the land across dark stormy seas !

DEATH IN YOUTH.

I.

I TOOK her long hair in my trembling hand,
And gazed down thro' the depths of lustrous
eyes

'Brimful of love, turned up most gentle-wise
To meet mine, dry and bleared with the sand
Thrown in my clenched face from out the land
Of barren death by blasts articulate
With ghostlike gibbering laughter. All my fate
Burnt on my heart in fire by that red brand

Upon her cheek—"My all! my only light
To guide and save me when the storm is high!
My love, my life! my one star in the night
To tell of God—so far beyond my cry
He cannot hear—Ah God! thou hast the right,
Have pity, God,—so many long to die!"



II.

I gazed, and drank my fill from out her eyes
In deep-drawn draughts of love ; then, kneeling
down,

I took her hands in mine, and let the frown
Slip from my wearied brow, the bitter cries
Burst from my soul in torrents' wild uprise :

“ O little hands that must be mine no more !

O perfect head, and eyes with wondrous store
Of trust and love ! O hope that meteor-wise

“ Flashed through my sunless life, and made it gold !

Must ye all die ? and I be left alone,

Unfriended, maddened, desperately o'erthrown,—
With soul fresh-torn from soul,—to tread the cold
And trackless wilds of time, that stretch unknown
Thro' the dim mists of death to what they hold.”

III.

Then passion caught me, fiercely crushing me,
And cast me quivering still upon her breast ;
And she, she spake no word, but let me rest
In silence there a space—it seemed to be
Long years of anguish—then most tenderly

Her hand fell on my head ; in tenderest
Low tones of pity then she spake.—Oh best
Of voices so soon ceased ! Oh tones that flee
Before me in my dreams, so sad, so far ;
O thrilling tender voice I hear you still !—
“ Oh love, is this thy love,” she said, “ to mar
My rest, my only peace, by such wild war
Against high God ? By such wild words to kill
My one last hope in death’s close-coming chill ?

IV.

“ Nay, love, lift up thine head and speak, as thou
Wast wont to speak a happy while ago :
Lift up thine eyes, that I may feel and know
Thou art mine wholly. Love, thou knowest how
I loved, and love thee ; lay upon my brow
One kiss—death comes—make thou thine own
words true ;
‘ For every man there’s still good work to do,
And still for each an everlasting Now.’ ”
Then brake her voice. And round us clinging there
The dark night slowly gathered more and more.
In the grim silence by the outer door

A bird chirped in its nest ; a gust of air
Stirred through the leaves ; . . . and when up
rose the sun
I knew that youth and hope for me were done.

WAKING.

DIM as the borrowed beauty of the moon ;
Soft as the last sad notes of some sweet song
Sung low at even, caught and breathed along
Of dying breezes—"Dead, ah, dead so soon !"
O ! face what mean you breaking thro' my swoon !
O ! words why wake you one such long time dead !
Might I not sleep while still the sun is red,—
I, who was smitten at the height of noon ?

I thought 'twas surely death ;—life held no more .
For me of pain, who'd felt the sorest pain—
When down I reeled and fell with deafening roar
Of judgment in my ears ; and all the strain
Crashed in me, broken on death's echoing shore !
Ah, wake me not,—I may not sleep again.

AFTER WAKING FROM SORROW.

“LET the dead sleep : but thou awake, arise !
Thou hast no space for dallying with thy tears.
When the great silence falls upon thy years,
How wilt thou empty-handed face her eyes ?
Not only thou hast sorrow ; round thee lies
A world of sorrow ; make thy sorrow strength.
Thou pray’dst for wisdom : lo ! her gates at
length !”
So spake the spirit from my altered skies.

Then I arose amidst my weariness,
And wrapped my sorrow round me for defence,
And took the world’s rough way, companionless,
With hungry heart ! till deeper grew the sense
Of something in the world beyond the guess
Of happier days, or youth’s sublime pretence.

WORK.

I STAND amidst the workers. Nevermore

Can idle sadness lull me into sleep.

In the loud haunts of toil, or where winds sweep

Above broad backs on open field or shore ;

Or where the wide free billows toss and roar

Around bold hearts;—there do my comrades keep

Their manhood strong and pure ; and love may
reap

Of honest helpful love the amplest store.

Thrice blessed is the man who once hath found

Work that God set there for his hand to do.

There is no greater blessedness in ~~all~~ the round

Of God's wide love. O heart, know this is true ;

And take this truth for comfort. Close to thee

God sets thy work. Arise ! be glad and free !

PROMETHEUS.

My life is with the living ; the live years
Strike thro' my soul with pulses swift and strong ;
Stir me with sounds of God ; with thoughts that
throng
Past utterance—whose only speech is tears.
Above the children's cry, above the fears
Of feeble hearts, above the clash of wrong
I hear the hours strike with strokes of song
Upon the throne of God ! And who so hears,
Tho' the world reel, must trust ! O bitter cry
Of children hungering ! O sisters worn
With so, so many tears, and so forlorn !
O brothers, so sore spent with toiling ! I
Am heavy with your sorrows ; yet I mourn
As one who mourns a darkness in the sky !

TO F. D. B.

IN MEMORY OF LAKE BANK, CONISTON.

You bid me sing in memory of the days
That we have passed together—you and I—
Beneath the happy quiet of the sky
In happy speech ; save when we ceased, to gaze
In reverent silence where the soft air, growing
Dimmer and sweet, was shaken as with thrills
Of unseen wings, and smitten of strange rays ;—
Till night came on, and, save the river's flowing,
No voices brake the silence of the hills.

Haply my song may fail beneath the stress ;
Haply the silent grasp of hand in hand
Told more than all my words could e'er command ;
Yet at thy bidding lo ! I lift and press
My harp against my heart, that, with its throbbing
The strings may stir with music of its own.
Alas ! no longer, while the light grows less,
I sit and listen to the water's sobbing,
Along the hillside hear the night-winds moan.

O sweet, sweet days that have so quickly fled !
Whose memory hangs about me like a dream ;
Whose voices are as sounds in sleep that seem
To hover round the fields of quiet dead :—
Forgotten songs, and shrills of vanished laughter,
And words of love that were not breathed in vain ;—
Come back, old days, a little while and shed
Your gleams and glows, and all that followed after
Of starry nights, about me once again !

Once more I stand at noon-day in the sun,
And gaze across the waters fleckt with gold ;
And hear the plash of wavelets that are rolled
In mimic surge upon the shreds of stone.
I hear the laughter of the winds, and calling
Of sweet glad voices, where each quivering leaf
Scatters the sunlight ;—and mine eyes roam on
To that lone hill, which, when the sun is falling,
Rears its grey head like some old Celtic chief.

Once more, within the circle of the hills,
I lie as in the hollow of God's hand,
And feel the sky above me ; and the land,

Stretching far up, and murmurous with rills,
Shadowed of clouds, or in the sunlight lying,
 Seems drawn about me like a seraph's wings ;
And folds me round, and with its rapture fills
My heart with passionate hope, as when one dying
 Hears out of heaven the song an angel sings.

For I was weary of the clattering strife,
 Feebled with failure, sick with half-success ;
 And on my heart I felt the world's pain press
Its cruel edge, like a slow murdering knife.
But then—ah then there rose a sound of singing ;
 And wondrous voices from the clear hills leapt,
Stirring such sweet lost music of my life,
That there, alone, while still the song was ringing,
 In shame and joy I bowed my face and wept.

O Earth ! my Earth ! O forests, hills, and streams !
 Flowers, and songs of birds, and springing grass !
 Shadows, and winds that whisper as ye pass
Some word of wonder from a land of dreams !
O trees, and sunlight, and loud waters calling !
 Bear witness how I love you, and have known

From childhood all your joy ;—O let your gleams
And glorious voices, still about me falling,
Make me for one short hour feel less alone !

O I have loved thee, Earth !—and with thy love
Now mingles love of him for whom I sing.
Ah, friend, whose laughter made the echoes ring
Glad music from a heart, the strength whereof
Is earnest love, and hope, and manful doing,—
Take all my love, and hold it close to thee !
And when some evening the sweet woodland dove
About thy home wakes memory with its cooing,
Turn from thy toil, and wander back to me.

Slowly the sun drops downward to its rest ;
Softly the wind is whispering to the trees ;
And hushed is all the humming of the bees ;
And silent is the swallow in its nest.
Only the river with its plaintive flowing
Calls, as its waters past the branches flee :
And the sweet earth, by quiet now possessed,
Seems all asleep—save that from yonder glowing
A sound I hear that's like a restless sea.

THE DYING EARTH.

I THOUGHT as I lay on the side of the hill,
And gazed on the valley, and drank in my fill
Of the rich autumn colour, and smelt the sweet
breeze

As it crept up the slope from the whispering trees—

I thought: "As the sun sets in splendour of clouds,
So the year is now setting in splendour that shrouds
The cold bitter face of grim Death for a while ;
But Earth is now dying for all her sweet smile !"—

And my heart rose in passionate strife with grim
Death

For the beauty I loved ; and the quick panting
breath

Came hotly and fierce for a while—and then died ;
And Death mocked my tears with its pitiless pride.

So I lay there alone with my head on Earth's breast,
And heard her heart beat in the silence ; and pressed

My lips on her lips in a bitter goodbye ;—
While loneliness grew round me wide as the sky.

But the gentle wind pitied me there as I lay ;
And stooping down softly, in tenderest way,
Just touched my sad cheek ;—and its touch was as
mild
And pitying and sweet as the touch of a child.


So I rose and looked down on the Autumn-red wood.
And the smile had not faded. And there as I stood
A skylark sang out of a sunny grey cloud ;
And in the nut-bushes a blackbird piped loud.

And the trees stirred and swayed with a whispering
sound,
As the yellow leaves fell. And the air all around
Was filled with soft voices of great things and small :
And down in the valley I heard the stream call.

So pain fled away, and left love there alone
For the beautiful Earth,—which from childhood
grown

Like the heart of my heart :—and Death mocked
me in vain ;
For the joy of the Autumn was mine once again.

EARTH.

 EARTH thou art ~~wonder~~ beautiful ! and ever more
Thy face to me is wonderful, O Earth !
The death of thy red suns : the glorious birth
Of godlike dawns : thy silences : thy roar :
The rushing plunge of waves upon thy shore :
And all the voices of thy murmurous seas :
Thy great deep-shadowed forests : and thy trees
Tossed i' the wind : and all thy rivers' store

Of gurgling sound : and all thy sweet birds' song—
All, all are wonderful ! In them I hear
The music of my life ; in them grow strong
To face the littleness that each day brings ;
In them alone, unsilenced by weak fear,
My soul finds utterance for its secret things.

COME AWAY.

COME away! O come away!

The flower will bloom another day;
The wind will stir amidst the trees;
The summer and its golden bees
Be glad again. Then come away!

Weep not o'er the senseless dead,

Come away!

Nay, droop not thy golden head
So sadly. Let thy footsteps stray
Once more amidst the flowers: and see
How nature smiles and calls to thee.


Come away!

Nay, look not so hopeless sad!

Come away!

At his touch all life grew glad.
Do not grieve:—'tis little pain
Passing from the wind and rain
Into sunshine. Let him be.

Come away!



Death hath only joy for him.

Come away !

No more shall the rich man's whim

Vex his heart, nor friend betray.

See how peacefully he sleeps !

On his face the risen day

All its tender rapture keeps.

Come away !

Come away ! O come away !

The golden hair shall ne'er turn grey,

The golden youth ne'er droop nor change.

In sunniest hour of manhood he

Hath passed to his eternity.

Come away !

One last look ; no longer stay.

Come away !

THE DEAD EARTH.

I WANDERED alone in the valley to-day ;
In my teeth met the wind, which had piled all the
way
With a deep drift of snow ; so struck up thro' the
wood,
And weary and sad climbed the hill ; and then stood.

All around was no stir in the deadly white trees ;
Not a sound did I hear but the moan of the breeze
As it fled o'er the rocks, and leapt over the hill ;
Or died in the pines with a horrible thrill.

The sky up above me was cold as a stone ;
The clouds in dark masses lay piled every one.
And I stood there in silence, most weary and sad ;—
Till the pain of the place all at once drove me mad.

And I threw myself down on the earth ; drove my
arm
Deep into the drifts ; and strove, careless of harm,



Till I reached the rough earth ; laid my face on its
face ;
Pressed it close,—and, in pain, held my breath for
a space.

Then up from my heart the words burst with a sob ;
“ O Earth art thou dead, that thy face has no throb
To answer my face ? Not a stir when I press
My heart against thine in my bitter distress ?

“ O Earth whom I love, I have wandered and sought
All day thro’ the hills ; and still all day I thought,
‘ She sleeps as the sea sleeps beneath the still
moon ;
She sleeps whom I love, she will wake again soon ! ’ ”

But the earth would not hear :—and I felt the cold
wind
Sweep again thro’ the trees, as there fled thro’ my
mind
The thought of how first I loved earth in the
spring ;—
When there on a sudden I heard a bird sing !

Then the madness fled straightway, and left only
shame,
So that quickly I rose ; and I thought that my
name
Was called from the hillside : but nought could I
see,
Nought could hear, but the bird singing there on
the tree.

And the song was as sweet as the spring's sweetest
song,
And the trees seemed to stir as the notes thrilled
along ;
Then I bowed my head humbly, and said : " This
is love !
Dear God, let me learn of thy robin thereof ! "

THE NOONDAY QUIET.

SAN REMO.

No breeze has wandered here to rouse
 From noonday sleep a flower or tree ;
And softly thro' the orange boughs
 Comes up the murmur of the sea.

There is no cloud in all the sky ;
 The whole wide heaven is soft and fair,
Space above space serene and high,—
 One gleaming ocean of blue air.

All noiselessly the sunlight floods
 The shore, and all the upland fills,
Where motionless the olive woods
 Stand dreaming on the silent hills.

No stir of voice or song is heard
 Of happy folk at work or play :
No twitter of a wakeful bird
 Breaks on the quiet hour of day.

The dead leaves on the pathway lie ;
The air is still as still can be.
Yet with a slow-drawn languid sigh
Breathes heavily the restless sea.

O sea ! hast thou so weary grown
Already of the warm bright sun ?
Or doth thine heart o'erfull make moan
Because so many days are done ?

O heart ! dost thou for wantonness
Lift heavily thy listless breath ?
Or sadness spring from joy's excess ?
From thought of life the thought of death

Yet sweet 'twould be beneath such skies
To drop the tools when labour's boon
Of drowsiness is on the eyes,
And cease on such an hour of noon.

To drift on such a silver sea
Far outward to the unknown shore,
Blown by soft winds deliciously,
With dreams that widen more and more.

Till hope that fleeth shall not flee ;
And love shall fold its swallow-wings ;
And wisdom shall be born in me,
And wonder at diviner things.

Till in those golden realms of air
This broken self shall be made whole ;
And then perchance, I wonder, there
If soul shall speak itself to soul.

So in glad musing dies away
The sadness of my heart's excess,
Born of the languorous hour of day,
Or wrought of toil's sweet weariness.

—And now once more the world awakes ;
And distant murmurs move the air.
And hark ! upon the silence breaks
The little bell that calls to prayer !

LIFE'S MYSTERIES.

A MYSTERY is round us from our birth.

At first it is the sight of flowers and trees ;

The song of birds ; the whispering of the breeze ;

The moving clouds ; and all the holy worth

Of mother's love. Till on the growing earth,

With changing wonder of the sun and moon,

The mystery of life comes all too soon,

And takes the heart, and spoils the free young mirth.

Then flowers, and clouds, and nature's happy
things

Suffice no more ; but those that work or weep

Claim comradeship ; from out the which there
springs

Strange mystery of love ;—beneath whose breath

The mystery of sorrow wakes from sleep ;—

Then last of all the mystery of death.

THE NIGHTINGALE.

It was the hour for angels, when sweet day
Sinks back o'erpower'd in the arms of night,
And gentle sleep, with the slow fading light,
Drops like a dew from heaven ; and every lay
Of the sweet birds is hush'd ; and softlier play
The winds amidst the leaves, not silenced quite,
But moving with a daintier delight,
While Earth's loud echoes slowly die away.

It was the hour for angels—and I heard
A voice most like an angel's—the brown bird
Pouring the tender tumult of her song
At the wood's edge, where falls the moon's pale
beam,—
So wild, so sweet, I listen'd all night long
As one who fears to break a happy dream.

TO ITALY.

CHRISTMAS EVE.

FAIR land, I would the happy Christmas bells
Rang in for thee a time of gentle peace !
Of steadfast patience, till the rich increase
Of thy full harvest come ; whose promise swells
All noble hearts with hope ; whose youth foretells
A glorious manhood, when the noises cease,
And fretful faction shall thy soul release,—
To learn good rule all fancied form excels.

Fair land, whom England loves ! Thou pictur'd
dream
Wrought for his pleasure by some god of old !
Europe's young son ! O, may thy days unfold
Still brighter hopes for thee ; nor waiting seem
All weariness !—If but thy heart be bold
Plain steadfast work a glorious thing to deem !

THE COMING OF SPRING.

I WAITED long time, and I wondered and said :

“Spring surely is coming, for winter is fled.”

But a bitter wind blew through the blossomless
trees,

Drove the dust in dull eddies, and moaned on the
leas.

“Will Spring never come, nor have pity at all

On the thirsty brown grass? 'Neath the old orchard
wall,

Where the primroses sleep, will they waken again?
And the crocus laugh softly in joy of the rain?”

So I wondered at dawn as I lay in my bed ;

And I wept when I thought that the hawthorn was
dead.

And I said, “I will sleep, for the Spring is not
here,”—

When all of a sudden there fell on my ear,

Thro' the half-open window and thick ivy leaves,
The drip drip of rain from the thatch of the
eaves ;

And I heard the quick chirp of the birds, and the
smell

Of the fresh-moistened earth stole in softly, to tell

That the clouds had come down in the quiet of
night ;

Poured their drench of sweet rain on the fields ; that
the blight

Of the east-wind was stayed. Then there fell upon
me


Great joy, and I leapt up the wonder to see.

And I threw wide the window to welcome the
Spring ;

And my heart knew the joy at the heart of each
thing.

And the voices of streams, that were silent so
long,

Brake the silence, the sweet birds all burst into
song.



And the horse stamped and neighed in the shed ;
and the sheep
In the pen 'gan to stir, and the young lambs to
leap ;
While the wind thro' the sunshine with eddying
gust
Drove the rain o'er the meadows like thin clouds
of dust.

And I knew where the flowers would grow ; where
the grass
Would wave 'neath the wind ; where the shadows
would pass
Of the clouds on the hills ;—for in sunshine and
rain,
My Earth, thy sweet Spring-time had come once
again.

DANTE

[IN THE PIAZZA DEI SIGNORI, VERONA.]

HE standeth facing southwards : round his head
All day the doves wheel on soft-sounding wing ;
Or idly strolling by a boy will sing
Some old song sweet with memories of the dead.
And all about the palaces is shed
A golden sunlight ; while dim shadows fling
A mystery round the porch, which once did ring
With echoes of the mighty Scala's tread.

His heart hath turned him southward ;—in his eyes
A far-off look ; and, lifted to his chin,
One nervous finger marks the pain within
Of stern restraint—the exile pain that cries
At night in lonely places, but which keeps
Grim silence yet, while yet the thunder sleeps.

VOLAT IRREVOCABILE TEMPUS.

WHEN God's blue heaven was wide and fair,
And sweet birds sang in every dell,
And fairy whispers moved the air,
And trees had wondrous tales to tell ;

When all the world seemed in my scope,
And thoughts of fame my heart 'gan stir,—
She seemed too small for my large hope,
And love too grand to give to *her*.

But now the noonday heat is past,
And down the wind drifts fame's sad sound—
God, I would give my soul at last
If one such heart might yet be found !

CARLYLE.

WAITING FOR THE END.

THERE is a slumbering sorrow in the air ;
An inarticulate moan of unseen things ;
The hurried beat of many passing wings,
As tho' swift spirits to and fro did fare.
At mart, at home, in city, and in square
Men pause and ask what tale the hour brings
Of that old man who lieth, with the springs
Of life fast ebbing, down in Chelsea there.

O master whom we love—already flown
Beyond the strife of tongues, that grows and
grows—
We weep, we weep—half envying thy repose.
Girt round with many friends, yet all alone,
Thou liest, while the daylight comes and goes,
There in the silence facing the unknown.

CARLYLE.

THE END.

THE news comes tolling like a midnight bell,
“Dead! He is dead!” And for a space there
falls

A silence on the strife that filled our halls,
While he lay dying:—he, who did foretell
The noisy days—until his wrath did swell
Like the strong swelling of the wrathful sea.
The voice has ceased,—and nevermore shall we
Be stirred by any voice we love so well.

O mighty master of rough eloquence!
O heart so open to the world's despair!
O eyes so keen to see the world's pretence,
And all the wonder and the pathos there!
Our hearts 'gainst sorrow now make no defence—
To-day we know thou art no longer here.

TO F. D. B.

OLD friend, to-day I sit and think,
What chance or change the days may bring,
For us there will remain one thing,
Though fame's bright flames flare up or sink.

For us, who work with heart and head,
And win but little love the while—
Altho' we hold one human smile
Worth more than store of human bread.

For us, who thro' these fifteen years
Have slowly changed from boys to men—
Yet have our laughter now and then,
And boys' keen joys, mad hopes and fears.

For us—what chance be thine or mine—
For fifteen years we have been friends ;
For fifteen years—what more amends
For pain and strain could Heaven design !

For me—I quiet sit, and wait
The sentence which the hour brings:
Tho' hope has lost its morning wings,
I do not grieve to leave my fate

In God's wise hands. We are so small,
That for his work it well may be
He wanteth no poor fool like me:
We can but plan—he worketh all.

So friendship strengthens me with hope:
Friendship, a living thing that grows
From strength to strength, until the close
Of life and strife; and whose wide scope

Shall stretch beyond the grave, and be
The sweetest thought that heaven can hold,
The one great hope that makes us bold
To face death and eternity.

"THEY THAT GO DOWN TO THE SEA
IN SHIPS."

THE mother is sleeping,
Her babe on her breast,
So tired with weeping—
Ah then, let her rest,
Let her be ;

For the night wind comes moaning from over the sea,
The waves washing high on the wild open shore.

The father is striving ;
The storm rageth high ;
His boat is fast driving
Where sunken rocks lie
On his lee.

And the fierce wind goes crying far over the sea,
The waves dashing high on the wild open shore.

The angels are leaning
With God from the skies,

"They that go down to the Sea in Ships." 127

They know not his meaning,—

Dare not seek his eyes

What shall be !

And the fierce winds go raging far over the sea,
The waves dashing high on the wild open shore.

A hand is uplifted,—

No more can they know,—

The dark clouds are rifted ;

The storm is laid low ;

Shadows flee ;

And the dawn wind blows softly far over the sea,
The waves washing high on the sunny grey shore.

Glad angels are singing ;

And two in their joy

So closely are clinging,

While laughs the wee boy

On his knee.

And the soft wind goes whispering over the sea,
The waves washing high on the wild open shore.

"LOVE, SING TO ME WHEN I AM DEAD."

"LOVE, sing to me when I am dead :
Shed no sad tears, but softly sing ;
I would not that my vanishing
Should bow this little golden head
With sorrow long. When all is said—
Life hath been merry in the spring ;
Nor yet hath summer taken wing ;
And autumn ways are sweet to tread !"

Thereat a silence on him fell—
And Death drew closer where he lay.
With her bright hair he strove to play—
In vain. And then—a tender knell
Of heartbreak rose with trembling swell ;
Broke on a sob,—and died away.

ARS LONGA—VITA BREVIS.

DROP the tools, come away, rest thee awhile !
Life should have spaces for song and for smile.

Fame is so frail, dear heart ;

Soon life and fame depart :

Rest thee by me !

Come away ! Come away ! How the birds sing !
Earth is alive with delight of the spring !

Work is so small and vain ;

Hope only waketh pain :

Wander with me !

Down in the valley the voice of the stream
Gurgles and babbles all day of its dream.

Come Love, it saith, and go

Where the great waters flow,

Singing with me !

130 *Ars Longa—Vita Brevis.*

Where the light slumbers, and branches are green,
There a path wanders the shadows between.

Thinking but makes thee sad :

Ah, whilst thou canst be glad,

Roaming with me !

Out in the forest where primroses blow,
Banks of soft mosses slope ; winds come and go ;

There rest thy tired eyes,

Where the cool shadow lies,

Dreaming with me !

Sunlight fades ; night will come ; Death will be
Life and its gladness for ever gone by.

What canst thou do, at best ?—

Better to take thy rest,

Sleeping by me !

WORDSWORTH.

IN this fair land, when Arthur ruled of old,
The youth whose heart stirred him to chivalry,
Who fain would be a knight, if that might be,—
To Arthur's court he came, and kneeling told
The king his hope ; which granted, forth went he
To strive in mimic fight his strength to mould.
Then, when a quest came crying o'er the wold,
As Arthur's knight rode forth to smite and free.

So, Wordsworth, in likewise to thee I fare ;
And place, O king ! my hands between thy hands ;
And pray thee that thou swiftly grant my prayer ;
That I thy knight may ride to cleanse the lands.
O master ! what sad wailings fill the air !
See, I am ready—there the war-horse stands.

KEATS.

RAPT lover of immortal memories !

Young spirit, that with such melodious breath
Didst sing, beneath the hovering wings of death
Songs sweet as ever midst her voiceful seas
Fair England heard. Thou didst, with godlike ease
Give beauty voice ; to love that languisheth
All that the yearning heart of music saith ;—
Stray'd reveller from earth's banished mysteries

Alone thou ~~thou~~ sangst like some sweet bird forlorn
We heard thee but unheeding ; till, borne
Beyond our voices and the gaping street,
Thou'dst vanished where far other voices greet
And leaning out the everlasting morn,
Spenser and Milton listened for thy feet.

IN THE TWILIGHT.

THE winds are all at rest ; the day is done ;
The leafy banners of the wood are furled ;
And all the hollow noises of the world
Have ceased,—or but as drowsy murmurs run
Along the verge of sound. The pensive nun
Of heaven steals forth alone ; and on the skies
And on the earth now like a deep spell lies
The calm last blessing of the vanish'd sun.

Come, gentle night, and steal into my blood,
And temper all its pulses to thy will.
Flatter my heart ; and all my being fill
Brimful of faery fancy ;—on thy flood
Floated far inland, leave me, raptured still,
Lost in the brakes of thine enchanted wood !

IN THE OLIVE WOOD.

In the green silence of the olive trees,
Where every wanton wind was hushed and still,
I heard a voice come singing down the hill :—
“O Italy ! my Italy !” ~~Thereat~~ The breeze
Wakened and whispered ; and the distant sea’s
Faint cry came loudlier upwards ; and the rill
From the deep valley sent a sudden thrill
Of elfish music. Mingling now with these,

Now soaring up to heaven, the voice sang on.
And still it sang : “O Italy, my land !
Beloved beyond all words ! Sun never shone
On lovelier hills !”—And so had passion fanned
The woodland air, it seemed love’s self that sang.
Downward it passed, and still the hillside rang.

MEMORIES.

A FRAGMENT.

I.

WE parted ; I was half a boy
And half a man ; my eyes were dim ;
I scarce could see the face of him,
My father, where he wished me joy.

I could not hear the words he said ;
My heart had only sense of pain.
I thought " We shall not meet again
This side the meeting of the dead."

O mother, with thy tender face,
The worship of my boyhood's years,
My manhood's faith—those parting tears
Keep silence round their sacred place.

I seemed one who, ere life is done,
Hears weeping friends about him stand ;
And cannot cry, nor stretch a hand ;
But hears them leaving one by one.

The cold close grave-clothes clutched me round,
And strangled dumb that first despair ;
The voices ceased, and all the air
Swayed round me with a swooning sound.

O ! so well loved ! that far-off morn
'Twas hard to think the thought "no more,"
When, gazing on a sinking shore,
From boyhood's grave the man was born.

O ! so much loved ! and better known
Still better loved as days go by !
My heart flies fondly back, and I
Will follow where my heart has flown.

II.

My island midst thy tropic seas,
Was there no sense somewhere that day

Of sadness where thy sunbeams play
Amidst the shadows of thy trees?

Or where thy silver-tinkling stream
Has made a grotto 'neath the hill,
And birds sing, and the winds are still—
Was there no trouble in thy dream?

Or where the giant creeper flings
Its shower of flowers from mighty boughs,
Where squirrels and great lizards house,
And all the air is bright with wings—

Was there no silence—meant for me—
Who loved them, till thro' love they seemed
Life of my life, in what I dreamed
The truest life that life could be?

Haply some flower that knew my face,
Some bird that loved me for my love,
Waited in vain ; some mountain grove
Felt lonelier for a little space.

A foolish fancy—it may be.

It eased my heart, while in the sun

I stood and watched,—till, one by one,

The mountains sank behind the sea.

III.

O ! boyhood's dream ! that with a sweet

An eager song didst mount so high ;

Then slowly dropping from the sky

Didst feel the flowers about thy feet !

Again I hear thy eager song ;

Again the eager wings are spread ;

The sky is blue above my head,

And flowers about my footsteps throng.

I wander down beside the stream,

The birds' clear voices greet the sun ;

And soft sounds mingle one by one,

Like murmurs in a morning dream.

I wander on ; about my knees
The cool sweet dew lies thick upon
The slumbering grass ; I wander on
Amidst the music of the trees.

O heart ! thou wast most happy then
In boyhood's golden days of hope—
That fairy time when thou couldst cope
With things beyond the cope of men.

Alas, that we should find it so !
The golden clouds but hide a wall
We may not pass ; that will not fall
For all the trumpet blasts we blow.

- And yet I would not lose to-day
My trumpet, which the forest queen
In that fair vision placed between
My hands ; and smiling passed away.

“ Courage and love and chastity—
These three are written on the rim ;
These three until thy days grow dim
Make thou ring out where'er men be ! ”

I stood knee-deep amidst the fern ;
 Above my head the giant trees
 Made music in the morning breeze ;
And far off sang the mountain burn.

The golden sunlights floated down
 From out the moving leaves, and made
 A glory round me in the shade,
And touched my forehead like a crown.

I raised my trumpet there, and blew
 A challenge to the whole wide world ;
 And with a boy's hot daring hurled
'Gainst many a foe, and fought, and slew.

For Love I fought, and Chastity ;
 And quick and hard the stout blows rang ;
 While in mine ear a sweet voice sang,
" Ride on, ride on, to victory ! "

But when the fight had waxed full-wild,
 Sudden the vision fled away—
 And there upon the earth I lay,
And sobbed as sobs a little child.

They were but shadows I had slain—
The hope, and not the vision, true—
And dimly in my heart I knew
The far off sorrow and the pain.

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THE END.

M'Farlane & Erskine, Printers, Edinburgh.



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